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RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 0372
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 0552
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 ABU DHABI 000702

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JERUSALEM FOR USSC GEN DAYTON

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TAGS: PREL PARM IZ IR AF PK SY LE IS AE

SUBJECT: CENTCOM COMMANDER ADMIRAL FALLON APRIL 24 MEETING
WITH ABU DHABI CROWN PRINCE MOHAMMED BIN ZAYED

Classified By: Ambassador Michele Sison, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S) Summary. On April 24 Abu Dhabi Crown Prince and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (MbZ) hosted CENTCOM Commander Admiral William J. Fallon for an introductory lunch, in what was the Admiral's first visit to the UAE since assuming command. Regional security issues dominated the conversation. Admiral Fallon expressed thanks for UAE cooperation on military and security issues and urged a more pro-active role with regard to Iraq. MbZ spoke in caustic terms of Iran President Ahmadinejad, stating that Iran was eternally dissembling, fixated on acquiring nuclear weaponry with "a very clear agenda" in Iraq and destabilizing intentions in Lebanon. MbZ was also highly critical of the Iraq Prime Minister, volunteering that he didn't "see much light on the horizon with Al Maliki and his government." He expressed worries about the Taliban resurgence in Afghanistan and doubts about Pakistan President Musharraf's ability to control extremists in his country. MbZ was dismissive of Syria's President, characterizing Bashar Al Asad as an unsophisticated liar. MbZ conveyed strong assurances of UAE support and friendship. Also present were UAE Commander of Special Operations, Major General Juma Ahmed Al Bawardi Al Falasi, and MbZ's Director of International Affairs, Yousef Mana Al Otaiba, and Advisor Jack W. McGuinness (Colonel, USA ret.). End Summary. 2. (S) On April 24, CENTCOM Commander Admiral William Fallon was hosted at a lunchtime meeting by Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (MbZ), Deputy Supreme Commander UAE Armed Forces. Admiral Fallon conveyed greetings from DepSec Defense Gordon England and thanked MbZ for the UAE's cooperation on military and security issues. Admiral Fallon said that, 5 weeks into his position as CENTCOM Commander, he was visiting the region in order to benefit from the advice of regional leadership. MbZ expressed appreciation for the visit, commenting that there were many issues in which the U.S. and the UAE were intimately involved.

IRAN - ATTEMPT AT DIALOGUE A FAÇADE

¶3. (S) MbZ opened by talking about Iran, remarking that many in the region felt a dialogue with Iran should be launched. His own view is that any attempt at dialogue with Iran would be a faade, implying that the Iranians' normal way of

engaging was to dissemble and to bargain as if in a bazaar. For nearly 30 years, he said, Iran had followed a determined "Islamic" line and they were now regressing to a Persian way of life in the 21st century while faced with complicated contemporary problems. With vast oil and gas wealth and abundant water supply ("300 rivers" from which to generate hydroelectric power), Iran was lost in dreams of its 5,000 year history and visions of a new Persian Empire. Admiral Fallon concurred that Iran had a provocative approach to the world, noting that Iran was clearly involved in antagonizing international opinion and working to destabilize its neighbors on either side, Iraq and Afghanistan.

¶ 14. (S) MbZ went on to castigate Iranian President Ahmadinejad, Ayatolla Khamenei's own choice, a fanatic committed to a Persian revolutionary destiny, which includes meddling in Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Afghanistan. MbZ recalled the Iranian hand in its "25 year" support for Hezbollah and its role in the 1994 bombings of the Jewish cultural center in Argentina and the Israeli embassy in London. "Definitely," he said, "they have an agenda, a long term strategy, and they are willing to be patient and follow that strategy." Continuing to disparage Ahmadinejad, MbZ stated that the Iranian president hadn't changed his basic views since he was a 20 year old hostage-taker. According to MbZ, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, who had taken "a respected position against the Shi'a," had Ahmadinejad correctly pegged with his comment: "I saw him looking into my eyes and lying." MbZ described Iran as a rich country, very different from poverty-stricken North Korea, but which was nonetheless completely fixated on its first priority -- acquiring a nuclear weapon. MbZ remarked that the UAE thinks carefully about its future and its interests, and is not in a position to sacrifice \$16 Billion in annual

ABU DHABI 00000702 002 OF 004

trade with Iran -- all the while realizing that this same neighbor and major trading partner is "dangerous."

¶ 15. (S) MbZ recalled an Abu Dhabi dinner many years before with Rafsanjani's brother Mohammed, who was close to Ahmadinejad, in which it was related that Iran would not rest until it acquired Weapons of Mass Destruction and the ability to launch missiles that would go straight to Washington. For the Iranian leadership the appeal to national pride was a calculated effort to divert the Iranian people from their real problems. MbZ compared the typical Muslim extremist frame of mind to the Western perspective: "In the West you want to live a full life, but in the East many Muslim fanatics want to die and go to heaven."

IRAQ -- UAE LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN PRIME MINISTER AL MALIKI

¶ 16. (S) Ambassador asked about reports that Iraqi PM Al Maliki would be visiting the UAE. MbZ indicated that the visit had been postponed but might occur sometime next week, but volunteered that he "didn't see much hope in investing in Iraq," concluding: "I really don't see much light on the horizon with Al Maliki and his government."

¶ 17. (S) MbZ shed further light on PM Al Maliki's only previous visit to the UAE (July 3, 2006) from which the UAE had gleaned many negative reports. MbZ griped that Al Maliki sent his Defense Minister to the February 2007 International Defense Exhibition (IDEX) in Abu Dhabi rather than come himself. The message that came with the Iraqi minister was that Al Maliki was unhappy about UAE funding directed to the Sunnis as well as negative media coverage in the UAE. MbZ said the UAE sent back a counter message inviting Al Maliki "to fly over and talk to us." Complaining that Al Maliki had not even called anyone in the UAE since the July visit, MbZ held out some possibility that "better communication" might help to "repair bridges." (Note: Foreign Minister Abdullah later informed Ambassador that UAE had asked Al Maliki to come next week as Comoros President, Japanese PM, and Uruguayan President were coming to Abu Dhabi this week. However, Al Maliki said he could not come the week of April

¶30. Thus, it appears that Al Maliki will not meet UAEG before the May 3 Iraq Compact meeting. End note.)

¶18. (S) According to MbZ, the Iraq issue comes back in the end to Iran, which has been a problem in Iraq for generations: "Iran has had sleeper cells in Iraq for 400 years -- not just since 9/11." Iran, MbZ said, is planning for the long term, the "Big Terror" and "has a very clear agenda." Lamenting the human cost of the War on Terror, MbZ said, "America has paid a big price for its beliefs -- with many body bags." MbZ drew attention to the "Faces of the Fallen" in American newspapers, "youth who sacrificed everything" -- expressing regret that many had died "for nothing" as victims of bombs and IEDs without being able to fight back. MbZ asked the Admiral what would happen if America withdrew, agreeing that Iran would be joyous and the resulting instability would be bad news for the region. Admiral Fallon responded, "War is not pretty. We owe it to those who died to make our best efforts," indicating that a few months would be needed to see results from the Baghdad Security Plan, pointing out that there is little violence in 14 of Iraq's 18 provinces and that even Anbar province is starting to turn around. MbZ asked whether the Al Maliki government would fall and what would happen then. Admiral Fallon responded that Al Maliki's fall would "bring us back to square one," noting that one of the great problems in Iraq, which otherwise has much potential, is the factional leadership pushing their own agendas. The challenge, said the Admiral, is get Iraqis to move beyond their special interests and for their leaders to open their eyes and become bigger men.⁹. (S) Discussion shifted to foreign fighters in Iraq, MbZ commenting that he was not surprised to learn that many were coming from North Africa. MbZ also criticized the negative role of the media in Iraq, rhetorically asking: "How many good things that have happened in Iraq are ever covered by the media?" The Admiral urged the UAE not only to attend and participate in the Iraq Compact, but also to host a future conference and to reach

ABU DHABI 00000702 003 OF 004

out proactively to the Iraqi leadership, which vitally needs the support of its neighbors.

TALIBAN -- AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

¶110. (S) Discussion shifted to the destabilizing effects of the Taliban resurgence and the willingness of extremists to return Afghanistan to a medieval Muslim state. Admiral Fallon cited the Afghan Government's need to win the confidence of its people and the necessity for President Musharraf to do more to control the tribes and prevent Taliban from crossing the Pakistan border from Quetta and other points. MbZ described the Taliban as "totally obsessed" and expressed contempt for their "so-called Muslim values." Ambassador reminded principal interlocutors of UAE efforts to bring Karzai and Musharraf together.¹¹. (S) MbZ said that Pakistan, from his point of view, with its 150 million people, "120 nuclear bombs and 20,000 Taliban schools," was ultimately more important than Afghanistan and urged the U.S. to ensure that Musharraf understood that point. Maintaining that the UAE has excellent relations with Pakistan (which has 700,000 expats in the UAE), and with Musharraf personally, MbZ asked how come the Pakistani President can sleep at night with thousands of madrasas in his backyard while MbZ himself can't sleep for thinking of "the one Taliban madrasa" in the UAE. According to MbZ, Musharraf has not sized up his own situation adequately nor has he calculated the impact of extremism on Pakistan's future. MbZ decried the funding for the Taliban coming from charities throughout the Muslim world, indicating that he would not be surprised to learn of money coming from the UAE. Ambassador reminded the Crown Prince of the April 25 meeting of the U.S.-UAE Joint Terrorism Finance Coordinating Committee, in which this issue would be directly addressed. MbZ vowed complete support for efforts to choke off funds for Muslim radical organizations like the Taliban.

LEBANON & SYRIA, ISRAEL & THE PALESTINIANS

¶12. (S) Admiral Fallon asked MbZ's views on the Syria-Iran connection, and how Syria had let Iran gain such a foothold in Lebanon. Syria, said MbZ, sees Lebanon as part of Syria, and Asad believes it will work to his advantage to have Iran involved in Lebanon: "The Syrians are not that sophisticated, and Bashar Al Asad is a liar. We are not dealing with a sophisticated person." Yet, MbZ said he still favors engaging with Syria, noting that Damascus went out of its way to receive U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. "Engaging Syria," he declared, "is not a bad idea. We need to play more politics."

¶13. (S) Noting the UAE's \$150 million contribution to Lebanon last year MbZ said that Iran is pumping in excess of \$150 million every month to destabilize the country. Taking a swipe at the Israeli lobby, MbZ said "Sometimes the policy of Washington is managed by Tel Aviv," qualifying the statement by suggesting that "Tel Aviv's interests could still be served by a Washington-managed policy," and concluding "Washington needs to see the whole region with a larger vision."

MBZ: "WE'RE IN THE SAME BOAT" -- "WAY FORWARD NOT EASY"

¶14. (S) Admiral Fallon thanked the Crown Prince for the UAE's proposed financial assistance to professionalize the Palestinian Security Forces. MbZ countered, without being specific, that "the U.S. could help the UAE with the Israelis and the Egyptians." Ambassador noted that USSC General Dayton would visit Abu Dhabi and meet again with Sheikh Hazza on May 6. MbZ assured Admiral Fallon that the UAE and the U.S. are "in the same boat" and expressed the hope that the Admiral would be a frequent visitor. "A lot is going on," MbZ said, "but rest assured that we are choosing our friends based on very clear decisions and understanding that the way forward is not going to be easy."

ABU DHABI 00000702 004 OF 004

¶15. (U) Admiral Fallon has reviewed this message.
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